

Tools of the Trade

Cultivating Preservation Skills for Cultural Landscape Maintenance

I am very pleased with the training... Everything I have learned so far is something that I can use in my park. I look at trees totally differently now.

—James Gardner, Gardener Leader, Boston NHP and participant in the Olmsted Center's Arborist Training Program, 1997

Jim Gardner's participation in the Arborist Training Program has given him a new perspective on trees—one which is based on an understanding of a tree's biology and knowledge of scientific management techniques, and on seeing trees as important historic features of cultural landscapes. This integration of landscape maintenance skills with historic preservation is the foundation for a variety of training programs developed by the NPS's Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation over the past five years. The Olmsted Center, based at the Frederick Law Olmsted NHS, was founded in 1992, specifically to provide technical assistance to park managers and their staff on the stewardship of cultural landscapes. As part of this mission, a number of training programs have been initiated in response to the recognition of landscapes as cultural resources and the many questions which were being asked about preservation maintenance of these resources.

It has only been in the last decade that we have begun looking at landscapes "totally differently," seeing them as a record of the past and as an expression of our culture. Today we identify a

wide diversity of landscapes as cultural resources. Designed landscapes such as public parks, cemeteries, and private estates and vernacular landscapes such as farms, battlefields, and industrial sites are all cultural landscapes. Most national parks and other historic properties have important cultural landscapes; many are central to the site's mission and its significance.

Cultural landscapes have been officially recognized by the NPS since the late 1980s. Since then, the National Park Service has developed a variety of programs and publications that provide guidance on identification and preservation of cultural landscapes. Several National Register bulletins have been developed specifically to provide advice on identifying and evaluating a variety of cultural landscapes.¹ As with historic structures, management of historically important landscapes is guided by a series of preservation standards and guidelines. The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects* provides the basic principles for preservation practice.² These standards, revised in 1992, now specifically include cultural landscapes. Just this year, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* was published based on the model established by the guidelines for historic structures.³ These guidelines provide technical advice to managers on a preservation approach for the cultural landscapes under their care.

These principles provide the framework for landscape preservation and have guided many important preservation planning projects. However, to date, much less attention has been paid to the field of preservation maintenance, yet it is essential to landscape stewardship. Similar to preservation crafts for historic structures, the care of cultural landscapes requires specialized knowledge of skills, techniques and materials. In 1872, Frederick Law Olmsted, preeminent 19th-century park maker, noted the importance of landscape maintenance:

The character of the park...is to be far more affected by the work...done upon it than by all that is to be done upon accurate draw-

Gardener Intake Program graduates.
Gardener Intake Program Coordinators Charles Pepper (Olmsted Center) and Gene Gabriel (Adams NHS) with graduates, 1996. Courtesy of the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation.



Arborist trainees learn techniques of tree climbing, 1997. Courtesy of the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation.



ings.... For example, the...seeding, mowing, rolling and weeding of turf; the spading, forking, raking...the constant repairs, ordinary and extraordinary, and...the thinning and pruning of trees and shrubs....

As Olmsted pointed out, it is the day-to-day decisions and skills of landscape maintenance staff that can protect the integrity of the historic resource, or can diminish it.

Cultural landscapes usually include important historic structures and other built features, but the vegetation is often an equally important, though often unrecognized contributor, to a landscape's character. The use of plants in the landscape reflects social, cultural, and economic history just as clearly as structures or any other feature. The fact that vegetation grows, changes, and eventually dies does not alter the fact that it is part of the historic record of a place. Recognizing that vegetation is part of the historic fabric of landscapes does, however, have a number of implications for preservation of this type of resource.

While the importance of preservation crafts for building preservation has been recognized and taught for many years, a similar tradition does not exist for landscape preservation maintenance. For example, while many parks have maintenance crews to care for landscapes, very few parks have staff trained in horticulture or arboriculture. There are also many parks with significant landscapes that do not have maintenance staff assigned to

their care. In addition, until the mid-1980s, the priority of most park grounds maintenance operations was on improving landscape aesthetics and did not consider the landscape as a historic resource.

In response to a growing interest in cultural landscape maintenance skills, the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation began to develop training in landscape preservation principles and practices. Collaboration with other national parks (Adams NHS, Boston NHP, Hampton NHS, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS, and Weir Farm NHS), the NPS Cultural Landscape Program in Washington, DC, and the Denver Service Center, universities (Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University and University of Massachusetts), and nonprofit organizations (such as American Association of Botanic Gardens and Arboreta) has been critical in development of a variety of training programs in three main areas:

Upward Mobility and Career Development Programs

These programs offer participants an opportunity to broaden their understanding of landscape preservation practice through formal training in combination with field project experience. In addition to the Gardener Intake Program and the Arborist Training Program (described below), a variety of internships and training details have been individually designed.

Gardener Intake Program. This intensive two-year training program was established in 1991 to correct shortfalls in skilled landscape maintenance staff and to enhance staff retention. The program provides a career ladder while assisting parks with meeting critical staffing needs with qualified, well-trained and highly motivated employees. The program combines traditional classroom education with hands-on, field experience, usually on multi-park crews accomplishing landscape projects. The curriculum may include adult education courses at local institutions, correspondence courses, recommended conferences, selected reading, and participation in short-term details and on field projects. In two programs, eleven graduates have completed the programs formal and field training requirements and are now working as professional gardeners in parks in the Northeast Region.

Arborist Training Program. This 18-month program was initiated in response to a tremendous backlog in historic tree management and the need to develop specialized skills in the principles and practices of tree care. The training is designed to be self-

paced; however, participation in certain sessions are required. Modeled after the Gardener Intake Program, the training is a combination of formal coursework and study with participation in field projects. Successful completion of the program will qualify graduates for professional certification through the International Society of Arboriculture.

Preservation Maintenance Field School

Specialized technical courses on conserving and maintaining historic landscape features have been developed such as: Historic Orchard Preservation; Maintaining Historic Trees; Rejuvenating Historic Hedges; Pruning Historic Trees and Shrubs.

Instruction in these courses is usually provided through on-the-job training as part of accomplishing a landscape preservation project. For the last five years, the Olmsted Center has been conducting 10-15 historic landscape projects per year by assembling



Historic Orchard Management Field School in historic orchard management, Morristown NHP. Courtesy of the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation.

maintenance staff from several parks into a multi-park crew. This provides a critical mass for the crew and an opportunity for training in landscape skills.

Conferences and Workshops

A variety of classroom training sessions and national conferences have focused on current landscape preservation topics and have also encouraged an active exchange of experience and information among landscape maintenance professionals. These events range from a national forum on Vegetation Management for Historic Sites conducted in cooperation with the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, to a two-day Historic Landscape Maintenance Workshop at the Presidio and Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

Each of these training programs are directed at enhancing the capacity of park staff to care for cultural landscapes. This is accomplished through a variety of ways, often combining training and work projects conducted with multi-park crews. Dan McCarthy, Gardener at Boston NHP and a trainee in the Arborist Training Program this year, recently described the dual accomplishment of many of these programs:

Through training programs such as the GIP [Gardener Intake Program] and Arborist Training Program, the Olmsted Center has not only provided participating parks with skilled landscape maintenance personnel, but it had also developed multi-park skills teams to assist area parks in their backlog of landscape maintenance work through Olmsted Center work projects.

This combination has proven very successful; there is a tremendous learning experience, people teaching each other on the job, and a real and satisfying sense of accomplishment and teamwork.

Sharing the Tools of the Trade

Olmsted's insight on the critical importance of landscape maintenance holds true. To preserve landscapes, we must recognize the important role of the staff providing stewardship and invest in their professional development. As part of the NPS training community, the Olmsted Center plans to continue to develop new programs, expand the partnership network, and through new approaches, make training available to a wider audience.

For additional information on the Olmsted Center and training opportunities in landscape preservation maintenance, contact Nora Mitchell or Charlie Pepper at (617) 566-1689.

Notes

- ¹ National Register Bulletins have been published on designed historic landscapes (Number 18), rural historic landscapes (Number 30), traditional cultural properties (Number 38), historic battlefields (Number 40), cemeteries (Number 41), and mining properties (Number 42).

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 18: How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes*, by J. Timothy Keller and Genevieve P. Keller, (Washington, D.C., 1987); *National Register Bulletin 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes*, by Linda Flint McClelland, J. Timothy Keller, Genevieve P. Keller, and Robert Z. Melnick, (Washington, D.C., 1990); *National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for*

Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties, by Patricia L. Parker and Thomas F. King, (Washington, D.C., 1990); *National Register Bulletin 40: Guidelines for Identifying, Evaluating, and Registering America's Historic Battlefields*, by Patrick W. Andrus, (Washington, D.C., 1992); *National Register Bulletin 41: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*, by Elisabeth Walton Potter and Beth Boland, (Washington, D.C., 1992); and *National Register Bulletin 42: Guidelines for Identifying, Evaluating, and Registering Historic Mining Properties*, by Bruce J. Noble, Jr., and Robert Spude, (Washington, D.C., 1992).

² *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects*, revised in 1992, were codified as 36 CFR Part 68 in the 12 July 1995 *Federal Register* (Vol. 60, No. 133). A brochure on the standards is also published by the National Park Service.

³ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and*

Reconstructing Historic Buildings, by Kay D. Weeks and Anne Grimmer, (Washington, D.C., 1996); and *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, by Charles Birnbaum with Christine Capella Peters, (Washington, D.C., 1996).

Nora Mitchell is the Director and Charlie Pepper is the Manager of the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, Northeast Region, National Park Service, Boston, Massachusetts.

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John Richardson

Preserving the Baha'i House of Worship

Unusual Mandate, Material, and Method

The Baha'i House of Worship is located in Wilmette, Illinois. It is owned and maintained by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i of the United States. Expressly free of religious service or pageantry, the building and its grounds are dedicated to all mankind as a quiet place for prayer and meditation. The owner intends that the House of Worship fulfill this function for 1,000 years.

The temple's construction began in 1920 and was finished in 1953. In 1978, the House of Worship was entered in the National Register of Historic Places. A building investigation in 1983 initiated a 10-year restoration program. Upon completion of the restoration, the owner created an in-house group to design and carry out a long-term program of conservation.

This conservation group has assembled and codified all historic and recent records pertaining to the building. It now approves, specifies, and documents the details of any in-house or contracted work undertaken. Utilizing a rigorous

inspection regime, it regularly monitors the condition of the building. In workshops on site, the group's members carry out specialized maintenance, materials research, and restoration of the historic concrete.

Crystal Concrete

Ornate architectural concrete covers the exterior and interior surfaces of the building. This cladding is pierced by tens of thousands of openings and is accented with innumerable highly sculpted bas-reliefs. The surface finish on the concrete is known as "exposed aggregate," a subtle texturing that leaves the facets of sub-surface aggregate and sand visible. Made entirely from crushed white and clear quartz crystals, the concrete is brilliant white in color and glistens.

The adaptation of concrete into an aesthetically beautiful material was revolutionary when construction began. The process was invented and perfected by John Early, an architectural sculptor in Washington, DC, whose firm designed, fabricated, and installed the cladding. The House of Worship was the most ambitious of Early's many